DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 259 973 SO 016 674

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TITLE Philosophical Practice and Educational Reform.
PUB DATE 85
NOTE 27p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Change Strategies; Concept Formation; Discovery Learning; Discussion (Teaching Technique); *Educational Change; *Educational History; Educational Improvement; Educational Needs; Educational Objectives; Elementary Secondary Education; Fused Curriculum; *Futures (of Society); Heuristics; Inquiry; *Integrated Curriculum; Interdisciplinary Approach; Metacognition; Models; *Philosophy; Primary Sources; Skill Development; Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS Plato of Athens

ABSTRACT

The history of philosophy is examined, and what the practice of philosophy may portend for the future of education is discussed. The traditional prohibition of philosophy being taught to children is much indebted to citations from Plato's "Republic." Plato thought that the dialectic would subvert and corrupt children. But just as Socrates thought that philosophy should be studied by people of all ages, there are many educators who are open to the teaching of philosophy at the K-12 levels. These educators believe that philosophy paradigmatically represents the education of the future. The reform of education must take shared philosophical inquiry in the classroom as a heuristic model; philosophy should be injected into all academic disciplines. For this reform movement to work, discovery learning must be used in the classroom, students must be taught the conceptual tools necessary for true inquiry, the curricula must be rationally sequenced, primary sources must be used, emphasis must be placed on classroom discussions, curriculum fragmentation must be eliminated, skill acquisition and concept development must reinforce one another, the importance of the metacognitive must be recognized, and teacher education must be changed. (RM)

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Philosophical Practice and Educational Reform

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1985

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There is something on the contemporary educational scene that goes by the name of "philosophy for children"; in some quarters it is known as "doing philosophy with children," and in some quarters it is referred to, a bit irreverently, as "doing philosophy to children." Whatever it is called, it is no longer unfamiliar to education-watchers, and I propose to spend very little time discussing its internal nature or its place in the present stage of things. I would like, rather, to speak a bit about its remote past so as to determine how and where, at least as far as education is concerned, philosophy "went off the tracks." I would also like to say something about what the practice of philosophy, once it gets back "on the tracks," may portend for the future of education.

1

We are all familiar with the fact that philosophy emerged in Greece about a hundred generations ago, and for this achievement we honor such figures as Thales and Anaxagoras and Anaximines. Apparently philosophy was first embodied in aphorisms, in poetry, in dialogue and in drama. But this variety of philosophical vehicles was short-lived, and philosophy became that which, by and large, it has remained - an academic discipline, access to which was limited to college and university students.

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For the most part, these students in the upper echelons of education have been expected to learn philosophy rather than to do it. Often they study the history of systems of philosophy (perhaps from the pre-Socratics to Hegel, or from Aristotle to St. Thomas, or from Russell to Quine) in preparation for final examinations, or they prepare extended philosophical arguments on obscure but respected topics in order to qualify for academic degrees.

Yet philosophy is a survivor. In an era in which most of the humanities have been driven to the wall, philosophy has somehow managed to stay afloat - if only barely - largely by converting itself into a knowledge industry: pace Socrates! But the price of survival has been heavy: philosophy has had to abdicate virtually all claims to exercising a socially significant role. Even the most celebrated of those who profess philosophy nowadays would be likely to admit that, on the vast stage of world affairs, they appear only as bit players or members of the crowd.

Oddly enough, despite the continued social impotence of philosophy, it has remained internally a discipline of incredible richness and diversity. It is only in the past few centuries that a new note has sounded, suggesting that philosophy has practical applications undreamt of by academicians, and here and there are those who marvel (like Descartes amazed that mathematics offered such powerful foundations but was unused) at the great, sweeping panorama of its applicability.

Nevertheless applying philosophy and doing it are not identical. The paradigm of the latter is the towering, solitary figure of Socrates, for whom philosophy was neither an acquisition nor a profession, but a way of life. What Socrates models for us is not philosophy known or philosophy applied, but philosophy practiced. He challenges us to acknowledge that philosophy as deed, as form of life, is something which any of us can emulate.

Any of us? Or just the males? Or just the adults? To many philosophers, reasonableness is found only in grown-ups. Children (like women) may be charming, beautiful, delightful, but they are seldom considered capable of being reasoned with, logical or rational. Descartes, for example, and the young Piaget as well, seem to have thought of childhood as a period of epistemological error which is fortunately sloughed off as one matures. The adult/child dichotomy has an obvious parallel in the dichotomy between ideal industrial management ("rational") and ideal workers ("cheerful"). The dichotomy between adults and children, insofar as the capacity to pursue the philosophic form of life was concerned, would likely have seemed to Socrates absurd.

Let us recall that a discipline available only on the college level or above is likely to be considered a discipline inappropriate for children or inessential to their education. However, this has not consistently been the case with philosophy, and Derrida has shrewdly noted that until the Reformation, philosophy had been part and parcel of the education of adolescent princes and princesses. But the Reformation put an end to all that; philosophy appeared utterly superfluous when it came to the preparation of future businessmen and scientists. With the ascendency of the business ideology, philosophy was banished from the scene as far as the education of children was concerned. Not even Dewey, easily the most insightful of all philosophers of education, could bring himself to advocate philosophy as an elementary school subject, but that was because he had already committed himself to rebuilding education along the lines of scientific inquiry. For others, philosophy appeared to be too difficult for children, or too frivolous, or too arid; some even thought it too dangerous. What was it about philosophy that gave rise to these misgivings?

Let us turn back to Plato and re-examine his attitude towards teaching philosophy to the young. In the earlier dialogues, it will be recalled, Socrates

talks to young and old alike, although just how young they are is not clear. (Prof. Brumbaugh, for example, places the ages of the two children in the Lysis at eleven.) There is no indication that Socrates has any misgivings about these conversations with children (although on other occasions he is certainly capable of expressing the unease he feels about what he is doing: we have only to recall here his conduct in the Phaedrus.) But then comes what seems to be a dramatic reversal: in Book VII of the Republic, after genially admonishing us to keep children to their studies by play and not by compulsion, and after having perhaps overgenerously praised dialectic ("he who can view things in their connection is a dialectician; he who cannot, is not"), he urges that children not be exposed to dialectic, for "its practitioners are infected with lawlessness." (537) Young people, he says,

> "when they first get a taste of disputation, misuse it as a form of sport, always employing it contentiously, and, imitating confuters, they themselves confute others. They delight like puppies in pulling about and tearing with words all who approach them...And when they have themselves confuted many and been confuted by many, they quickly fall into a violent distrust of all that they formerly held true, and the outcome is that they themselves and the whole business of philosophy are discredited with other men." (539)

Certainly this latter remark is not to be taken too lightly. The situation of philosophy in those turbulent times was precarious enough, and Callicles, in the Gorgias, probably summed up the views of a great many worthy Athenians when he intimated that philosophy was suitable only for children. Nor can we forget that even Aristotle had to make a hurried exit from Athens so as not to afford Athenians an opportunity to do to him what they had done to Socrates, and thus "sin twice against philosophy."

This, then, is one reason for sequestering children and philosophy from one another: doing so is for the protection of philosophy, for if children are allowed to do it, it will appear unworthy of adults. The other reason is for

the protection of children: dialectic will subvert them, corrupt them, infect them with lawlessness. These reasons, it must be presumed, have been taken as conclusive ever since, and the authority of Plato has been invoked in order to deter educational initiatives which might have given children access to philosophy earlier on. What are we to say about this? Was Plato wrong to have written so vigorously in Book VII in opposition to dialectical training for children? Here it may be helpful to consider the picture of intellectual Athens painted for us by Gilbert Ryle. Ryle offers us a highly speculative portrayal of the manner in which the procedures and techniques of "eristic" or "dialectic" were taught to students. Intellectual contest was paramount: debaters were assigned theses to defend or attack, regardless of their personal beliefs, and it was through these "moot court" procedures, Ryle contends, that cogency in argumentation was fostered and achieved. These moot conditions "proved to be the beginning of methodical philosophical reasoning." There is nothing in Ryle's account to indicate that he found these forensic or sophistic techniques of instruction in any way objectionable.

Elsewhere, indeed, Ryle seems to feel that Socrates likewise was not inclined to distinguish between philosophical reasoning and philosophy. Thus he argues that Socrates, in the Apology, provides "only a perfunctory answer to the charge of impiety but a protracted defense of the practice of elenctic questioning." Ryle identifies such questioning as "the Socratic method," and tells us that it was the right to engage in such questioning that Socrates was most concerned to justify.

Here we must tread with great care. It is one thing to say that debate and argument can be useful disciplinary devices in the preparation of those who are to engage in philosophical reasoning; it is quite something else to assume that philosophy is reducible to argument. The eristic method of teaching,

probably introduced into Athens by the sophist Protagoras, may have been suitable for preparing future lawyers and politicians, but was it really serviceable for the preparation of everyone else (including would-be philosophers) who sought a more reasonable view of life? It would be strange indeed if Socrates, for whom the shared examination of the concepts essential to the conduct of life was of the greatest urgency, would have been content to equate that all-important pursuit with the dry, technical procedures of dialectical argumentation. What Socrates stresses is the continued prosecution of philosophical inquiry by following the reasoning wherever it leads (confident that, wherever it leads, wisdom lies in that direction), not the heavy breathing and clanging of armor in dialectical battles, where the premium is not on insight but on victory.

What made classical rhetoric and dialectic dangerous, for young people at any rate, was their separation of technique from conviction. Children should be given practice in discussing the concepts they hold and believe in, or halfway believe in. To give them practice in discussing matters they are indifferent to deprives them of the intrinsic pleasures of becoming educated, and provides society with future citizens who neither discuss what they care about nor care about what they discuss.

Forensic education, the preparation of lawyers who can argue for any side regardless of their own convictions (if they have any), should be considered a very special case, in no way a model for the rest of education. The breeding ground of amoralism is the training of technicians who assume that ends are given (or do not matter), so that their concern is merely with means, with tactics, with technique. If children are not given the opportunity to weigh and discuss both ends and means - and their interrelationship as well - they are

likely to become cynical about everything except their own well-being, and adults will be quick to condemn them as "mindless little relativists."

One may readily conjecture, therefore, that what Plato was condemning in the seventh book of the Republic was not the practice of philosophy by children as such, but the reduction of philosophy to sophistical exercises in dialectic or rhetoric, the effects of which upon children would be particularly devastating and demoralizing. How better guarantee the amorality of the adult than by teaching the child that any belief is as defensible as any other, and that what right there is must be the product of argumentative might? If this is how philosophy is to be made available to children, Plato may be supposed to have been saying, then it is far better that they have none at all.

Plato's condemnation of eristic argumentation by children is quite consistent with his general suspicions regarding whatever it was that the sophists were up to in Greece. Evidently he saw them as his rivals in subversiveness, only that they seemed to him to be undermining the foundations of Greek morality, while he was trying to undermine the foundations of Greek immorality. When they glibly equated dialectic with philosophy - equated, in short, the part with the whole - he and Socrates were not taken in. Nowhere does Socrates ever draw the line when it comes to doing philosophy with people of different ages, for doing philosophy is not a matter of age but of ability to reflect upon what one finds important. Indeed, when Callicles suggests to Socrates that philosophy is unworthy of grown men, we may imagine Plato's amusement at being able to implant so seditious an idea into the conversation.

It can hardly be doubted that the traditional prohibition of philosophy for children is much indebted to citations from Plato's Republic. Nevertheless it must be concluded that insofar as that prohibition has rested upon an appeal to Plato, it has rested upon a mistake.

ii

The contemporary educational system is frequently depicted as being monolithic, inflexible and impenetrable. However, it is considerably more pluralistic than these accounts suggest - more loose-woven, open-textured and diversified. Within its many crevices and interstices are school administrators to whom philosophy for children, for whatever reason, seems irresistible. Some prize it for its promise of improving reasoning skills; others admire it because students seem to enjoy it for its own sake rather than for the sake of grades or because it is relevant to their vocational aspirations. Some see it as the central stem of the elementary and secondary school, out of which the specialized disciplines can emerge; others see it as a wholesome preventive to drug and alcohol abuse. These educators may have some familiarity with the traditional rejection of philosophy for children, but they are pragmatic enough to reject it in turn. They like what philosophy does when children do it. They may be quite unaware that philosophy for children happens to fulfill Plato's pedagogical admonition that education be conducted "not by compulsion but by play." It is enough for them that, although it may not be easy to put philosophy in place, when it is put in place correctly, it works.

Under these circumstances, philosophy for children will continue to find its way into the elementary schools. After all, word of a good thing gets around; already, children who take philosophy are boasting of it to those who do not, and far from being viewed with odium and contempt, philosophy has become an elementary school status symbol. But all of these changes may be merely symptoms of a shift in fashion. How can philosophy as a required elementary school discipline - perhaps even as the core or armature of the curriculum - be justified?

This will not be easy, because it relentlessly demands of us the kind of self-knowledge which we, as educators, know to be highly elusive, but which Socrates was wont to insist is indispensable to the worthwhile life. We must put aside any illusions we may have about the benign influence we exercise, and speak frankly to one another as Santayana speaks of the "magnificent example" Spinoza offers us

> "of philosophic liberty, the courage, firmness, and sincerity with which he reconciled his heart to the truth...Many a man before Spinoza and since has found the secret of peace: but the singularity of Spinoza, at least in the modern world, was that he facilitated this moral victory by no dubious postulates. He did not ask God to meet him half way: he did not whitewash the facts, as the facts appear to clear reason, or as they appeared to the science of his day. He solved the problem of the spiritual life after stating it in the hardest, sharpest, most cruel terms. Let us nerve ourselves today to imitate his example, not by simply accepting his solution, which for some of us would be easy, but by exercising his courage in the face of a somewhat different world..."

It is fairly predictable that, if we examine the present educational system with such candor, we will be bound to conclude not simply that our educational system is imperfect, but that its imperfections are more responsible than we have cared to admit for the grave circumstances in which the world presently finds itself. If we deplore our leaders and electorates as being self-centered and unenlightened, we must remember that they are the products of our educational system. If we protest, as an extenuating factor, that they are also the products of homes and families, we must remember that the unreasonable parents and grandparents in these families are likewise products of the selfsame process of education. As educators, we have a heavy responsibility for the unreasonableness of the world's population.

Socrates must have known that the tincture of self-knowledge provided by philosophy would in itself hardly be sufficient to deter an Athenian state hell-bent on its own destruction. Nevertheless he persisted, even to the point of demonstrating that what he was doing was worth more to him than life itself. (Always the teacher, even his final act was educational!) Surely Socrates

realized that the discussion of philosophical concepts was, by itself, just a fragile reed. What he must have been attempting to show was that the doing of philosophy was emblematic of shared inquiry as a way of life. One does not have to be a philosopher to foster the self-corrective spirit of the community of inquiry; rather, it can - and should - be fostered in each and every one of our institutions.

There is, then, a narrower and a broader case for philosophy for children. The narrower case is simply that it makes a wholesome contribution to the present curriculum and the classroom. But the broader justification would have to rest on the way in which it paradigmatically represents the education of the future as a form of life that has not yet been realized, and as a kind of praxis. The reform of education must take shared philosophical inquiry in the classroom as a heuristic model. Without the guidance of some such paradigm, we will continue to drift and the curriculum will continue to be a hodgepodge.

iii

There are some educators today who see philosophy for children as prefiguring a thoroughgoing reappraisal of education, and they are eager to recite the characteristics of grade-school philosophy which they think the educational process as a whole should exhibit. This is without a doubt an appealing approach, but it should be accompanied by a comprehensive rationale. One does not usually attempt to redesign something unless one first knows what one expects of it or what one is trying to accomplish by means of it. The Greeks were probably the first people to insist that institutions (and not only men) needed to be perfected, and that only by means of ideals such as justice and freedom could existing institutions be measured and judged. It is true that the notion of perfection is unlikely to stir us in quite the way it did the Greeks. Nevertheless we may still agree with Dewey that nothing in human society commands our admiration as much as the way human institutions such as science and art, medicine

and law seek in their practice to approximate their respective ideals of truth and beauty, health and justice.

What then is the ideal which educational practice seeks to approximate? This would seem to be the primary question which the redesign of education must confront.

Thus put, the question may be too formidable to answer. Perhaps we should try putting a different question first: in what respect has education most greatly disappointed us? Here our response need not be in the least equivocal, and in answering the second question we automatically answer the first: the greatest disappointment of traditional education has been its failure to produce people approximating the ideal of reasonableness. (This is not to say that all who are reasonable must have been educated, but rather that whoever is educated ought to be reasonable.) It may well be that in centuries previous to ours, unreasonableness was a luxury that human beings could afford, even though the costs were high. It should be evident, however, that the costs of our tolerant attitude towards unreasonableness are now far beyond our reach. We may still smile indulgently as we read of the legendary figures of history who were splendidly capricious and magnificently illogical: they savaged their victims, but they did not endanger <u>everything</u>. This is no longer the case; we will have to reason together or die together.

Traditionally, education has been conceived of as initiation into the culture, and the educated person has been thought to be the "cultivated" person, or even, the "cultured" person. But a closer look at traditional education might reveal students studying the disciplines and in fact learning them while yet failing to think in terms of them or to fully appropriate them. Seldom has traditional education been able to meet Vico's challenge, to the effect that the

only way really to understand something is to re-enact it in some fashion. (one can understand what it is to be a storyteller only by becoming a storyteller, a painter only by becoming a painter, a dancer or a worker or a slave only by becoming a dancer or a worker or a slave.) For to be fully educated, one must (1) be able to treat every discipline as a language and to think fluently in that language; (2) be cultivated in one's reasoning as well as in everything else, remembering that reasoning is most effectively cultivated in the context of philosophy; and (3) demonstrate educational accomplishments not merely as acquisitions of intellectual properties or as the amassing of spiritual capital but as a genuine appropriation which results in the enlargement of the self. It is because philosophy is the discipline that best prepares us to think in terms of the other disciplines that it must be assigned a central role in the earlier (as well as in the later) stages of the educational process.

iv

It would be unrealistic to expect a child brought up among unjust institutions to behave justly. Abusers of the rights of others often turn out themselves to have had a history of being abused. Likewise it is unrealistic to expect a child brought up among irrational institutions to behave rationally. But the irrationality of institutions is preventable. There is no excusing them, for to do so permits them in turn to become the excuse offered by children who have been reared in such institutions and who adopt the irrationality of the institutions which fostered them.

The institution with which we as educators have primary concern is the institution of education. The irrationalities or "socially patterned defects" which permeate education have to be rooted out because they do not die out on

their own: they have a marvellous capacity for self-perpetuation. This involves our bringing a greater degree of rational order than presently exists into the curriculum, into the methodology of teaching, into the process of teacher education, and into the procedures of testing. The adjustments made within each of these must in turn be determined by the interrelationships they have among themselves, as components of education, just as the structure of education depends upon what kind of world we want to live in, since it will have much to do with the character of that world.

All too often the components of education have that kind of bizarre interrelationship of which the best analogy is the tail wagging the dog. Testing, which should have only ancillary status at best, tends to be the driving force of the system. What is to be on the tests structures the curriculum, which in turn has a controlling effect upon the nature of teacher education. (This is not to deny that current practice in schools of education is consistent with the ethos of higher education generally, just as that ethos is in general consistent with that of the larger society of which it is a part.)

As long as the major goal of education is thought to be learning, as is the case in all tribal societies, the recall model will dominate testing, and teachers will be trained to teach for the tests. What is equally sad is that the information-acquisition model which dominates education, rather than being one which encourages children to think for themselves, is a failure even on its own terms, for we are constantly appalled at how little our children seem to know about the history of the world, or about its political and economic organization. The effect of the tribal model is to stifle rather than to initiate thinking in the student. This does not mean we need to begin by producing better tests; we need to ask ourselves what kind of world we want to live in, what kind

of education is most likely to contribute to the emergence of such a world, and what kind of curriculum is most likely to produce such an education. We must then set about producing that better curriculum.

I have suggested that the model of each and every classroom - that which it seeks to approximate and at times becomes - is the community of inquiry. By inquiry, of course, I mean perseverance in self-corrective exploration of issues which are felt to be both important and problematic. In no way do I mean to imply that inquiry sets a greater premium upon discovery than upon invention, or a greater premium upon rule-governed as opposed to improvisational activities. Those who produce works of art are practitioners of inquiry no less than those who produce new epistemological treatises or new discoveries in biology.

If we begin with the practice in the classroom, the practice of converting it into a reflective community which thinks in the disciplines about the world and about its thinking about the world, we soon come to recognize that communities can be nested within larger communities and these within larger communities still, if all hold the same allegiance to the same procedures of inquiry. There is the familiar ripple effect outward, like the stone thrown in the pond: wider and wider, more and more encompassing communities are formed, each community consisting of individuals committed to self-corrective exploration and creativity. It is a picture that owes as much to Charles Peirce as to John Dewey, but I doubt they would quibble over the credits if they thought there was a hope of its realization.

As so often happens when people describe the cloud-castles of their dreams, the nitty-gritty realities are all too easily overlooked - realities such as the ladders by means of which the cloud-castles are to be reached, and the fearsome dragons and lurking trolls that are to be avoided along the way. Perhaps I can make a pretense of responsibility at this point by dropping a few brief

and altogether too cryptic remarks:

1. Appropriating the culture. The tribal model of education, in which the child is initiated into the culture, in effect provides for the assimilation of the child by the culture. The reflective model of education, in contrast, provides for the appropriation of the culture by the child. A good example would be the textbook. As it presently stands, the textbook is a didactic device which stands over against the child as an alien and rigid other. It has this obdurate nature because it represents the final end-product of the received or adult view of the discipline. As Dewey would put it, the textbook (a century after The Child and the Curriculum) is still organized logically, like a table of contents, or a sequence of lectures, rather than psychologically, in terms of the developing interests and motivation of the child. It is not something the child wants to enjoy and possess, in the way one enjoys and assimilates a story or a picture; it is instead a formal, dreary, oppressive and in many ways unintelligible summary of the contents which the child is expected to learn. All of this is quite unnecessary, since we know from the work of Bruner and others that material that is contextualized (e.g., presented in the form of a story) is looked upon by the child as something to be appropriated rather than something to be rejected. If children are to learn to think in the disciplines so as to appropriate their humanistic heritage, they must begin with the raw subject-matter of the disciplines and refine it for themselves. Masticating it for them in advance, the way mother birds masticate worms for their fledglings, is hardly the way to provide an education. Children presented with logic as a finished discipline find it repugnant, but they can find it delightful to discover it bit by bit and see how it all interlocks, and how it applies to language if not to the world. This is how logic was first discovered, and we can surmise that the early Greeks felt the same excitement and sense of power and mastery

in discovering the same logic. Indeed, to learn something is to learn it afresh in the same spirit of discovery as that which prevailed when it was first discovered, or in the same spirit of invention as that which prevailed when it was first invented. It is when this spirit - and it is truly the spirit of inquiry - prevails in the classroom that children will eagerly work through the materials of the arts and sciences and humanities for themselves, and will appropriate them to themselves.

2. Acquiring the conceptual tools. Introducing a budding artist to the great works of the past can be inspiring if it happens at the right time, but can be intimidating if it happens too soon. It is of primary importance, therefore, that young artists learn the tools of their trade at the same time that they learn to explore their own experience and discover their own intentions. All of this is equally applicable to the budding student. Children may be inspired by the stories they read of the lives of heroes and heroines, but if they are to think for themselves about ethics, they must engage in ethical inquiry, and this entails learning the tools of the trade, getting used to weighing the relationships of means to ends and parts to wholes, getting used to inquiring as to rules and consequences, getting used to exemplifying, illustrating, universalizing, ferreting out underlying ethical assumptions and deducing or inducing implicit conclusions. In time the use of these tools will become second nature to such students (and will be productive of presumptively justifiable moral intuitions), but until it does, the study of ethics entails the construction and appropriation of an ethical toolkit, and much the same can be said with regard to the study of any other discipline. An example of the way in which education essentially involves providing students with tools has to do with the use of criteria. Now, it is commonly accepted that a democratic society is one in which citizens are equipped to assess how well the institutions of that society

are working. Such evaluation necessarily requires citizens who have facility in employing criteria. If, however, our educational pundits are to be understood as saying that evaluation is a higher-order skill which one can perform only when one reaches the rarified atmosphere of secondary education or higher education, then we might as well forget about equipping students with such ability. The truth is that children cite reasons almost from the time they start speaking, and among those reasons are the purposes and criteria which they employ for evaluational purposes. It is therefore possible to give children systematic practice in the employment of criteria during the entire length of their stay in school so that, by the time they are ready for active citizenship, they will have become quite well-prepared to engage in the kinds of evaluation of institutions which democratic citizens must be able to perform.

3. The rationalization of the curriculum. The advent of philosophy for children required that the massive corpus of philosophy, the accumulation of thousands of years of philosophical scholarship, be reviewed in outline to determine how it could be sequenced into the successive grade levels of elementary and secondary schools. This had to be done without prejudice to the intense curiosity and readiness for discussion of very young children with regard to cosmological, ethical, epistemological and other philosophical issues. It had to be done in such a way as to strengthen rather than weaken intergenerational and familial ties and understandings. And it had to be done in such a way as to demand the utmost professionalism from the teacher, rather than in a way that would not be in keeping with the teacher's educational role (such as asking the teacher to play therapist.) For other disciplines to follow this example, they would have to review the entire corpus of their materials, rethink the serial order in which such materials as they selected for children could best be presented, and coordinate their sequences with the sequentialized offerings of the

other disciplines. No doubt this would mean that much that is presently offered (in, say, mathematics) might be dropped or reassigned to earlier or later grade levels, depending upon what a rational reassessment would indicate to be necessary. On the other hand, the rational sequencing of curricula would disclose many gaps and hiatuses that would have to be filled, in order to produce smooth transitions from one point in the curriculum to the next. A rational curriculum is so arranged that each step prepares the way for the steps that follow it and presupposes for its mastery the steps that precede it. It is quite unlike the present curriculum, which resembles a ladder with numerous missing rungs, so that the students who attempt to move on upwards are more likely to fall through and drop out.

4. The transition to the text. The secondary text, so much relied on in education, stands as a barrier between children and their humanistic heritage, just as "methods" courses stand as a barrier between teachers and the academic disciplines. To replace the secondary text with primary texts would be like rolling the stone away from the mouth of the cave and allowing the sunlight in. Unfortunately the mass-education process required by young democracies like our own must operate without the high degree of cognitive preparation provided children born into the elite families of previous societies. As a result, a transitional literature must be created to prepare the way for the encounter with primary texts in later schooling. This transitional literature (the best example of which would be the Philosophy for Children curriculum) would have consummatory as well as instrumental values in that it would be enjoyable for its own sake just as it would pave the way for the primary texts to be encountered in the future. Many students who will never read primary works in philosophy can nevertheless enjoy reading and discussing and writing about Pixie and Harry Stottlemeir's Discovery, but many others who have read these philo-

sophical children's novels will be lured by them into investigating Plato and Aristotle for themselves. If they are to encounter the Platos and the Aristotles of other disciplines, they will have to be led to them by cognate versions of Harry and Pixie, or by other kinds of transitional curricula which will provide children with provocative experiences which will cause them to be thoughtful and discursive. For precisely as the children's stories based on Homer, which we read long ago, prepared us for the almost déja vu thrill of actually encountering the Iliad and the Odyssey, so a vast literature of original but preparatory texts will have to be produced as a stepping-stone to the less accessible landmarks in our humanistic heritage with which high school and college students should become acquainted.

5. The primacy of discussion. Just as a cat can be more readily encouraged to find its way out of a box if the latching mechanism is operated by a string rather than by a key, so a child is more readily encouraged to participate in education if the emphasis is on discussion rather than on paper-and-pencil exercises. Discussion in turn sharpens the child's reasoning and inquiry skills as nothing else can. Yet in many classrooms talking has a bad name, and students' efforts to engage in it covertly are treated as evidences of disobedience, rather than as evidences of healthy impulses needing only to be effectively organized so as to be harnessed in the service of education. Indeed, although we should be ready to acknowledge that virtually every elementary school educational experience should involve or point in the direction of all five factors - reading, writing, listening, speaking and reasoning - we have to be prepared to see that these exist on different levels, that reasoning is common to all of them, and that speaking and listening form the foundations upon which reading and writing can be superimposed.

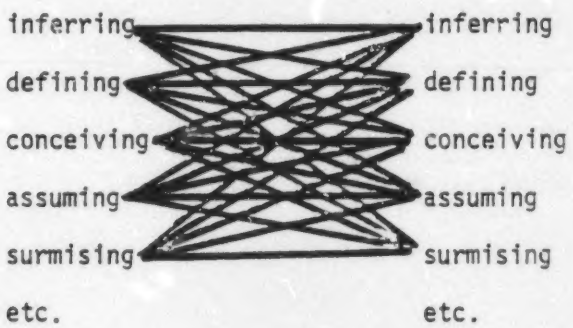
6. Eliminating curriculum fragmentation. We keep demanding that the individual academic disciplines do something to reduce their isolation from one another, because we see the bewilderment which such a fragmented curriculum is capable of producing in students. Unfortunately, these disciplines are virtually helpless to resolve this problem, so long as they continue to define themselves as subject areas to be learned, rather as languages in which students must learn to think. Another reason the disciplines appear to be remote from one another is that they have shrunken away from their former contours by aping the technical disciplines in repressing the philosophical aspects which had once been vital to their integrity. When a discipline attempts to divest itself of its ethical, logical, aesthetic and epistemological presuppositions and ramifications because these are "contestable" or "controversial," it removes the very features which enabled students to see it as a piece with all other academic disciplines. This is why the introduction of philosophy into the school curriculum tends to reduce rather than to intensify the students' sense of fragmentation. Philosophy is, so to speak, at right angles to the other disciplines so that together, like warp and woof, they interpenetrate and interweave until they produce a seamless texture. Education cannot recover itself without eliminating the suppression of the philosophical concerns indigenous to each and every one of the disciplines.

7. Transcending the concepts vs. skills dichotomy. Some educators, critical of the way in which some schools seem to take it for granted that they are preparing their students to go on into higher education while others assume they are preparing their students for lower-level vocations, have charged that the former schools emphasize conceptual development whereas the latter schools are dominated by a "skill and drill" mentality, with stress upon the correction of error rather than upon originality. While there is much that is meritorious in this view, it should be pointed out that conceptual development is not

irreconcilable with skill development, nor is the acquisition of skills dependent upon the performance of drills. Moreover, there is nothing incompatible in encouraging original thinking and at the same time encouraging students to find the errors in their thinking. There are teachers who embrace elementary school philosophy joyously because they think they have at last escaped the "tyranny of right and wrong answers," and are somewhat crestfallen when they learn that this is not altogether so. The injection of philosophy into the other academic disciplines does not so much eliminate reliance on "right and wrong answers" as it introduces a critical awareness as to when such answers are or are not appropriate, as well as a greater judiciousness when it comes to deciding what counts for wrong and what counts for right. If Philosophy for Children should be permitted to serve as an educational paradigm, surely one of the ways in which it can be most useful is precisely in demonstrating that skill acquisition and concept development (in this case the skills being reasoning and inquiry skills and the concepts being the ideas prevalent in the history of philosophy) can accompany and reinforce each other.

8. Recognizing the importance of the metacognitive. Educational psychology has suddenly discovered the importance of thinking about thinking: of studying, monitoring and reviewing one's own thinking processes. This in turn has focused attention upon the educational role of mental acts (e.g., assuming, supposing, assenting, guessing, surmising, recalling), of metacognitive acts (knowing that one remembers, assuming that one knows, and so on), of meta-affective acts (such as desiring to desire or hoping to love), and of corresponding mental acts (such as my inferring that you infer). If these acts are treated as performances to be improved upon by classroom drills, the results will almost certainly be counterproductive. There are, nevertheless, procedures by means of which students can be induced to become more attentive to their own employment of such behaviors. For example, one incident in a novel in our curriculum has a blind girl telling

about an accident at which she was present. The readers have their work cut out for them: distinguishing what she perceives from what she infers, what she accepts as true based on the testimony of others, and what she infers from that testimony. What is especially significant, however, is that the readers must infer what the girl infers, surmise what she surmises, guess what she guesses. They do not learn <u>about</u> these mental acts so much as they are compelled to perform them - and to perform them proficiently. This is, in general, how thinking skill improvement should be acquired, by voluntary performance rather than by compulsory drill, whether or not one can recite the taxonomic definition of the skills involved. The metacognitive is what makes self-correction possible. It is one thing for mental acts and thinking and inquiry skills to be directed upon the world, but it is something else again for them to be directed upon themselves. When we begin to draw inferences about the way we draw inferences, develop conceptions of the ways in which we form concepts, and define the ways in which we construct definitions, our thinking becomes cybernetic. But each mental act or reasoning skill may be turned upon any or all of the others, as in two columns where each component matches with every other:



The ferment of mental activity we see here is the self-monitoring aspect of the mind at work. Obviously we must learn how to foster it, for children are unlikely to reason better if they cannot reason about how they reason.

9. Educating the educators. Schools of education seem to be continually in the throes of identity crises. Like adolescents, they seem to be constantly trying on new personae depending upon whatever seems to be momentarily fashionable. At one moment it is group dynamics, at another moment it is classroom management, or right brain/left brain, or some other hare-brained, short-lived panacea. If the education of the future is to have substance, then the education of teachers is going to have to have integrity. It is going to have to discover its own identity, its own sense of direction, and this should give it a sense of proportion in terms of how it is to distribute its energies with respect to the hierarchy of its concerns. It cannot be assumed (as the academic disciplined used to assume) that mere knowledge of a given domain assures competence in the teaching of that domain. There have simply been too many teachers and professors who have known their fields but were incompetent teachers for us to believe that. On the other hand, it cannot be assumed (as schools of education have more recently assumed) that teachers can dispense with knowing the fields they teach if only they study courses in the methods of teaching those fields. This is a bit like trying to develop future novelists by giving them courses in "How to write a book." It is not that these approaches are altogether wrong: it is just that they are hopelessly one-sided. The teachers of the future should be conversant with the major aspects of the disciplines they teach, at whatever grade level they teach, as well as with the elements of instructional methodology that are appropriate to their disciplines. By and large, teachers should be taught by the very same procedures as those which they are expected to employ in the classroom. If discussions are desirable and lectures abhorrent in the classroom, there should be as little lecturing and as much discussion as possible in the schools of education. If the teachers of children are to encourage thinking for oneself, then thinking for oneself must be encouraged among teachers-

in-training by professors of education. Nevertheless, just as teachers cannot be effective if they dislike or are indifferent to children, they cannot be indifferent to the disciplines they teach: they must love them, for only if they love them will they love to rediscover them with each teaching, and only with that delight in rediscovery will there be that infectious enthusiasm which thrills children the moment they suspect it and which motivates them as little else can, for they recognize it as an invitation to share in an experience of understanding or in an encounter with meaning. Children will find education an irresistible adventure only when teachers find it so, and if schools of education are unable to provide teachers with this love of the disciplines they teach, then we have to find other ways of preparing teachers.

V

It is in the light of this plea for educational reform that Plato's misgivings about the educational approach of the sophists should be reassessed. No doubt Plato, especially in his early years, was attracted by much that the sophists had to say about education, but he drew the line when he suspected that the stress upon grammar, rhetoric and dialectic was not to be balanced by the student's immersion in and appropriation of the humanistic wealth of the culture. Having had a teacher like Socrates and a pupil like Aristotle, Plato would indeed have been peculiar if he had not felt distressed by the peddlers of educational nostrums who descended in droves upon Athens. The situation has not been without its parallels in later periods. Even now, the word "thinking" is on everyone's lips, and educationists have taken to dressing up even the most unlovely of their offspring as some manner of cognitive processing or problem-solving. In the past, this gambit was fairly often successful, and

many of today's educational administrators continue to accept it. But today there are alternatives to it which were lacking in previous years, and the difference these alternatives can make can be enormously significant. We must now be prepared to hear it parroted from every quarter of the educational community that the goal of education is to produce reflective and reasonable students, and that philosophy can play a major role in bringing this about. We must also be prepared to expect that pseudophilosophical approaches of every manner and description are going to vie for entry into the schools. It will be up to us to devote ourselves as energetically to distinguishing the philosophical from the pseudophilosophical as the philosophical from the non-philosophical.

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